

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /126 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 823

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7292

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, KS, JA

SUBJECT: KIM TAE-CHUNG CASE

REF: SEOUL 7227

1. KIM TAE-CHUNG CASE IS RECEIVING MODERATE PUBLICITY IN PRESS, FOCUSING ON QUESTIONS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUDGET HEARINGS AND REPORTS OF ROK-GOJ CONTACTS AIMED AT A SETTLEMENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO PUBLICIZED REPORTS OF KIM'S ACTIVITIES SUCH AS APPEARED ON WEEKEND.

2. REPLYING TO QUESTION BY OPPOSITION VICE-SPEAKER YI CHOL-SUNG IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OCT 30, FOREIGN MINISTER KIM YONG SHIK SAID THAT DURING RECENT ACTIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN TOKG AND GOJ CONCERNING KIM CASE DIFFERENCES HAVE BECOME VASTLY NARROWED. HE DECLINED TO PREDICT WHEN THE MATTER WILL BE SOLVED, BUT ADDED THAT THE TIME APPEARED TO BE "NOT TOO FAR OFF". IN FURTHER QUESTIONING OCT 31, OPPOSITION ASSEMBLYMAN KIM YONG-SAM ASKED WHETHER GOVT INTENDED TO RESTORE KIM TAE-CHUNG TO HIS PREVIOUS STATUS AND WHETHER THIS WOULD NOT IMPLY ADMISSION THAT "STATE POWER" WAS INVOLVED IN THE KIDNAPPING. FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED THAT A "STATE POWER" CERTAINLY WAS NOT INVOLVED, BUT EVEN IF LATER IT SHOULD TURN OUT OTHERWISE, THE
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FREEING OF KIM TAE-CHUNG SHOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

3. DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MEDIA WIDELY REPORTED FOREIGN MINISTER'S OCT 29 REMARK THAT GOVT WOULD TREAT A PASSPORT APPLICATION BY KIM THE SAME AS ANY OTHER CITIZEN. PRESS REPORTS TOOK THIS TO IMPLY PASSPORT WOULD BE ISSUED. MOFA OFFICER WHO WAS PRESENT AT HEARINGS TOLD POL COUNSELOR FOREIGN MINISTER MEANT PRECISELY WHAT HE SAID, I.E., THAT A PASSPORT APPLICATION BY KIM WOULD BE HANDLED LIKE AN APPLICATION FROM ANY OTHER KOREAN CITIZEN. HE SAID STATEMENT IMPLIED NO RPT NO PROMISE OR COMMITMENT THAT A PASSPORT WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY ISSUED ON APPLICATION.

4. KIM TAE-CHUNG IS MOVING OUTSIDE HIS HOME AND HAS MADE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO ALL FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WHO REQUEST INTERVIEWS. HIS COMMENTS TO REPORTERS ABOUT HIS PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND HIS INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A PASSPORT AND LEAVE KOREA ARE INCREASINGLY OUTSPOKEN. AN AMERICAN REPORTER SAID KIM PAID A VISIT OCTOBER 29 TO HIS FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATE KIM SANG-HYON, WHO IS IN PRISON ON A CORRUPTION CHARGE. A FORMER KIM TAE-CHUNG SECRETARY TOLD EMBOFF HE HAS VISITED KIM'S HOUSE EVERY DAY. HE ADDED THAT KIM EXPECTS TO GO ABROAD SOME TIME NEXT WEEK.

5. COMMENT: THUS FAR KIM TAE-CHUNG'S MOVEMENTS AND ACCESS HAVE BEEN LARGELY UNRESTRICTED, ALTHOUGH PRESS COVERAGE HAS DRIED UP.

6. FOR ITS PART, GOVT HAS SHOWN NO INTENTION OF PERMITTING KIM TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IN NEAR FUTURE. AT THE SAME TIME, IT WISHES TO MAINTAIN BEST POSSIBLE PUBLIC POSITION ON THE MATTER. KIM HIMSELF APPEARS TO BE PRESSING TO GET MAXIMUM USE OUT OF HIS PRESENT ACCESS TO FOREIGN NEWSMEN IN EFFORT TO GET GOVT TO PERMIT HIM TO LEAVE COUNTRY SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. HABIB

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